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The origins and early history of the Pontic-Cappadocian frontier

In memoriam Charles Manser Daniels (10 August 1932 – 1 September 1996)

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Abstract

With an overall length of about 550km, the Pontic-Cappadocian frontier was among the longest in the Roman Empire. It is also the least known, as there is a minimal amount of literary, epigraphic and archaeological evidence available for the location and identity of the province's garrison. In addition, many of the military stations known or believed to have existed on the frontier are now lost beneath the waters of the Keban dam. However, a re-examination of the available evidence, along with recent limited and spontaneous fieldwork in the region, allows for some tentative remarks to be made on the origins and early history of this frontier. These form the main subject of this article, and include the suggestion that Nero should be credited with the genesis of this frontier, not Vespasian, as usually indicated in the modern literature.

Özet

Yaklaşık 550km'lik toplam uzunluğuyla Pontus-Kapadokya sınırı Roma İmparatorluğu'nun en uzun sınırlarından biriydi. Eyaletin garnizonunun yeri ve kimliği ile ilgili mevcut edebi, epigrafik ve arkeolojik kanıtların azlığından dolayı en az bilinendirde. Buna ek olarak, sınırda olduğu bilinen veya varsayılan pek çok askeri yerleşim günümüzde keban barajının suları altında kalmıştır. Bununla beraber, bölgedeki kısıtlı ve kendiliğinden gelişen güncel alan çalışmalarıyla mevcut kanıtların yeniden incelenmesi ve sınırın kökenleri ve ilk tarihi hakkında bazı yaklaşık görüşler ortaya koymaya imkan verir. Bu görüşler bu makalenin ana konusunu oluşturur, ve modern edebiyatta sıkça belirtildiği gibi sınırın meydana getiriliş onurunun Vespasian'a değil Nero'ya atfedilmesi gerektiği önerisini içerir.

For almost the entire duration of the principate the effective limit of direct Roman control in the Anatolian-Eurasian interface zone was defined by the Pontic-Cappadocian frontier. This militarised boundary zone began at Trapezus (Trabzon) on the Pontus Euxinus, and transected the Pontic ranges to enter the upper Euphrates valley near Eriza (Erzincan), before following that river's course downstream to Charmodara, at its confluence with the Chabinas (Kahta Çay), from which point south the middle Euphrates marked the formal limit of Roman authority (*areae fines Romanorum*: *Tabula Peutingeriana* 10.2.U [ed. Weber 1976]). Given the 400km or so S-shaped track of the upper Euphrates between Eriza and Charmodara, the Pontic-Cappadocian frontier had a total length of about 550km, making it one of the lengthiest border zones in the entire Roman Empire. Moreover, this frontier can also claim to be one of the longest-lived of such entities. After all, it was conceived in the mid-first century and, except for a brief interval under Trajan, it remained the *de facto* limit of direct Roman rule in the region until made redundant in around 420 when (or so it would seem) the then *magister militum per Orientem* militarised and fortified 'Inner Armenia', that 'neutral' part of Armenia Major assigned to Roman supervision under the peace terms agreed at Ekełeac (Ekeghiats) in 387 (Blockley 1987: especially 231; 1992: 42–44, with 57–58). In all, then, the Pontic-Cappadocian frontier zone served Rome for a period of some 400 years, a stretch of time roughly equivalent to that dividing the reign of Elizabeth I from that of Elizabeth II.

These twin claims to fame aside, though, the Pontic-Cappadocian frontier has a third and less enviable standing amongst those concerned with the military affairs of the Roman Empire. To begin with, the main literary source for its inception and initial function is Tacitus' *Annales*, a work composed substantially *post-eventum* and also written in an ostensibly *annalistique* nature which actually makes its use 'a chronological nightmare' (Wheeler 2000: 174). Then, just to make matters worse, it is beyond any doubt 'the poorest of all [Rome's] frontiers in physical and epigraphic material' (Wheeler 1997a: 222). Yet despite the imperfect nature of the available data it has been possible to establish a number of 'facts' relevant to the history and nature of the Pontic-Cappadocian frontier, the seminal works being Timothy Mitford's unpublished D.Phil thesis and his substantially shortened published version of the same (Mitford 1972; 1980a). Since these items appeared both Mitford and many others, including some of Roman Anatolia's most determined and intrepid fieldworkers, have continued to search the region for further evidence directly or indirectly relevant to the nature and history of this frontier (for example, French 1983; Bryer, Winfield 1985: 48–53; Crow 1986; Mitford 1989; 1998). Nonetheless, secure details with which to understand its physical substance and the disposition and type of units that formed its garrison have by and large eluded discovery. Indeed, the legionary bases at Melitene and Satala excepted, unambiguous physical evidence for almost all the military stations known or believed to have existed along this frontier is yet to be discovered, while as it is, several of the sites involved are now irrevocably lost beneath the waters of the Keban, Kara Kaya (Malatya) and Atatürk dams. And as if this was not bad enough, there has been almost no advance in the number of inscriptions relevant to the subject under discussion, only a scant few – less than a dozen – of the entire epigraphic corpus for the region being records of a military nature.

Given this sorry state of affairs it is only natural that the Pontic-Cappadocian frontier has always been a somewhat neglected topic within the esoteric discipline of Roman frontier studies. It is also only natural to pose the pertinent question of 'Can anything new be said at this time about this frontier?' Yet the answer has to be an unqualified 'Yes', for while certain aspects and 'facts' concerning this topic have been subject to reconsideration over the past 20 years or so, there has been no attempt at an overall reassessment of the Pontic-Cappadocian frontier in the light of relevant advances in our knowledge (and beliefs) regarding the early Imperial Roman army and Roman 'frontier policy' in general. Moreover, the few new details that have surfaced regarding the physical nature of the Pontic-Cappadocian frontier, some resulting from necessarily *ad-hoc* and spontaneous fieldwork in the area, do allow for a critical re-examination of the existing historical and archaeological evidence, and thus the proposal of alternative explanations and interpretations from the broad information base that is available. Consequently, although a properly organised plan of fieldwork and excavation in the region is badly and urgently required before we can begin to understand fully its history, nature and function, it is nonetheless possible now to question seriously the popular belief that the Pontic-Cappadocian frontier line was not defined as a fortified border zone until the fourth century (for example, Speidel 1983a: 8; Crow 1986: 89; Hodgson 1989; Wheeler 1991; but note Mitchell 1993: 119). Furthermore, this process of re-evaluation allows the suggestion that the frontier's integral elements owed their genesis to Nero, not Vespasian and his immediate successors, as is often thought. That said the starting point for this essay has to be the creation of *provincia Cappadocia*, the *schwerpunkt* of the entire system.

The formation of *provincia Cappadocia*

The historical record concerning the annexation of Cappadocia is fairly straightforward. In AD 14, Archelaus I Philopatris Ktistes, its then ruler, was summoned to Rome by the new emperor Tiberius to answer various charges made against him. These charges are not specified in our sources but it seems he was plotting to restore to rule his grandson, Tigranes IV, deposed as king of Armenia Major in ca. 5–6 (Tacitus *Annales* 2.3–4; Dio 57.17.7; see Sullivan 1980a: 1160). In the event, sometime in 17 the elderly and gout-stricken Archelaus died after being arraigned before the Senate, but before a formal decision was reached on these charges (Tacitus *Annales* 2.42). The punctilious Tiberius then formally asked the Senate for its consent to annex Cappadocia as a Roman province, probably adopting this approach because of Augustus' testamentary injunction that the 'boundaries of the Empire should be confined to their existing limits' (Tacitus *Annales* 1.11; see Dio 56.33.2–3). Yet Tiberius evidently argued his case with skill as the Senate equally punctiliously granted him the permission to do as he wished (Strabo 12.1.4 [534]; Tacitus *Annales* 2.42; Suetonius *Tiberius* 37.4; Dio 57.17.7).

Augustus had established the doctrine that Rome's client subjects held their territories at Rome's discretion (see Strabo 17.3.25 [840]). Consequently, by Tiberius' time a pattern of action had developed in which a client state was only converted into a province if a ruler died without a viable replacement who could assert their authority over the territory in question (Mitchell 1993:

61–63). Thus, when Antiochus III of Commagene died about the same time as Archelaus, then once it was deemed his son was too young to rule in his own name Rome assumed custody of the territory until he came of age and was restored to his inheritance in ca. 37 as Antiochus IV (Tacitus *Annales* 2.42, 56; Dio 59.8.2; Suetonius *Caligula* 16.3). In the case of Cilicia, on the other hand, whose ruler Philopator likewise died in the year 17, Rome appears to have replaced him almost immediately with a nobleman named Archelaus (Tacitus *Annales* 2.42). Cappadocia, however, became a Roman province, even though it seems that Archelaus I Philopatris had at least one son, apparently the same Archelaus imposed on Cilicia at this time (Tacitus *Annales* 6.41; Sullivan 1980a: 1167–1168). In other words, the annexation of Cappadocia was probably decided upon even before Archelaus I Philopatris died. Tacitus' account would, indeed, seem to confirm this was so: he implies that Tiberius personally calculated how the income to be won from the territory would allow a halving of the *centesima rerum venalium*, the 1% sales tax, a levy which at that time was causing general unrest among the plebs at Rome (Tacitus *Annales* 2.42, 56).

That Cappadocia was a territory of sufficient real or potential economic value to justify annexation by Rome might seem surprising to those with only a passing acquaintance of what is now a somewhat barren and in parts unforgiving landscape. In fact, at the time we are concerned with, Cappadocia was renowned for its mineral resources (especially its highly regarded 'Sinopean' ruddle) and for the quantity and quality of its fruit and cereals (Strabo 12.2.10 [539–540]). It was even better known for its livestock: hence the 1,500 horses, 50,000 sheep and 2,000 mules Cappadocia supplied as part of its annual tribute to the Achaemenids, although by the Julio-Claudian period sheep were less important in the local economy than cattle (Strabo 11.13.8 [525], with 12.2.10 [539]; but note the fame of Cappadocian cloth in later years: *Expositio totius Mundi et Gentium* 40 [ed. Rougé 1966]). The Cappadocian breed of horse, on the other hand, continued to maintain a high reputation for its speed and strength into Roman times and beyond (for example, Fink 1971: 403, no.99; Hyland 1993: 108–109, 111).

Naturally, we cannot assess the relative worth of these commodities in the local economy when Cappadocia became a Roman province, nor can we even begin to assess the overall economic value of the area in cash terms. However, an approximate order of magnitude for Cappadocia's financial potential in the Julio-Claudian period is provided by the fact that the much smaller and less agriculturally-favoured region of Commagene rendered one billion *sesterces* in taxes to Rome in the two decades after its annexation in 17 (Suetonius *Caligula* 16.3). This sum was equivalent to 25,000,000 *denarii*, and thus enough to pay the basic *stipendium* for an entire legion throughout the 20 years involved (see Speidel 1992: 88). The point being that the chance of exploiting the larger and presumably richer territory of Cappadocia for the benefit of Rome must have seemed a godsend to Tiberius, especially given the great pressure he was then under to reduce the 1% sales tax and yet maintain a balanced budget (Tacitus *Annales* 1.78).

Thus the decision to annex Cappadocia as Roman territory for economic reasons, and by a possibly fortuitous circumstance, a decision that coincided with the departure of Tiberius' adopted son Germanicus to the east. Tiberius had awarded him the power of *proconsulare imperium maius* in the region, that is, absolute authority over all matters in the provinces and client states concerned, principally in order to enforce Rome's right to install a new ruler of Armenia Major, a privilege awarded to Rome under the terms of the treaty made with Parthia in 20 BC (Augustus *Res Gestae* 27.2; Tacitus *Annales* 2.43, 2.56). As it was, Tiberius had personally supervised the ratification of that treaty, after which the Roman nominee, Tiridates III Artaxias, was enthroned as ruler of Armenia Major: thus in a sense Germanicus was directly replicating his adoptive father's own role at that time, but in his case directing the installation of Zeno, a son of the king of Pontus, and who now took the Armenian dynastic name of Artaxias III. More to the point, though, Germanicus was now also given the responsibility of attending to matters in Cappadocia (and presumably Commagene and Cilicia as well), and so it was while he was on his journey through the region in 18 that Archelaus' kingdom was 'reduced to the form of a province' (Suetonius *Caligula* 1.2). The process itself was entrusted to Quintus Veranius, one of Germanicus' aides, although the only act we can directly attribute to this man is a reduction in the rate of tribute the Cappadocians paid into the formerly royal and now provincial treasury, a measure that not only made the change in ruler more agreeable but still produced the surplus Tiberius needed to halve the 1% sales tax at Rome (Tacitus *Annales* 2.46).

Veranius completed his duties in Cappadocia sometime before the year 20, as he was back in Rome by then, and so he must have handed control of the province to his successor in 18 or 19. Unfortunately we do not know the name of this new governor of Cappadocia, although our sources are quite clear that he and all of his successors until the reign of Nero was a person of equestrian rank (Tacitus *Annales* 3.10; Suetonius *Vespasian* 8; Dio 57.17.7; also Rémy 1986: 30–33). In this sense the method of administration introduced into the new province marked a notable departure from the system of

provincial government devised by Augustus in 27 BC. That reform resulted in the provinces being broadly divided into the two groups we know as the imperial propraetorian and the senatorial proconsular provinces (Strabo 17.3.25 [840]; see Dio 53.13–15). There was some flexibility and some inconsistency in the system as first formulated and as it later functioned, but generally speaking, the imperial provinces were those bordering hostile territory. Thus they were provided with one or more legions, and administered by a *propraetor*, a man of senior senatorial rank chosen by the emperor to guard and control the territory for a three-year period on his behalf: hence this official's title of *legatus*, or 'delegate'. The senatorial provinces, on the other hand, were regions that were – to paraphrase Strabo – 'peaceful and simple to govern without an army' (Strabo 17.3.25 [840]); an 'army' in this context being a legion. Consequently, these territories were provided with only a small contingent of auxiliary troops for internal security, and they were administered by a *proconsul*, likewise of senatorial rank, but appointed for a one-year term by the Senate to act on its (nominal) behalf. Cappadocia, however, became the first of what are known as the imperial equestrian or praesidial provinces, those generally rather small regions normally located far from any obvious external threat and which were also usually thought of as being constituent parts of the emperor's own personal property (Dio 15.2). As a result, such regions were also only provided with a limited number of auxiliary units to maintain internal security, while the emperor delegated their supervision to men of equestrian rank chosen from among his own clientele, sometimes giving them the title of *praefectus* to indicate their dual civil and military responsibilities, at other times naming them as a *procurator*, as they 'took care of' the emperor's property.

On the face of it, Cappadocia was hardly the appropriate place in which to inaugurate a new system of provincial rule in which a middle-ranking official was provided with a small auxiliary garrison to provide security for an entire province. After all, the territory directly bordered onto Armenia Major, a buffer state mutually coveted by Rome and Parthia and the stimulus for past (and future) wars between the two on account of its pivotal strategic location between Asia Minor and Persia (Luttwak 1976: 26). Thus it might have been expected that Cappadocia would be made an imperial province with a *legatus* and at least one legion. And in fact Tiberius' failure to do precisely this has caused adverse comment among some modern historians, who claim that he failed to appreciate the true strategic value of the territory or deliberately ignored this for personal reasons (for example, Levick 1976: 141; Luttwak 1976: 26–27). Hence the idea has assumed currency that Tiberius' main reason for making Cappadocia a praesidial province was simply to guarantee that the surplus revenue extracted from there went directly into his own coffers (see Levick 1976: 141; and more recently Mitchell 1993: 98).

Now, it is true that Tiberius had an unrivalled contemporary reputation for parsimony; it is also true that he left the imperial treasury crammed full with the enormous sum of 2,700,000,000 *sesterces*, an amount that might seem to justify this reputation (Suetonius *Tiberius* 38, 46–49, with *Caligula* 36). However, to insinuate that he was that miserly and morally bankrupt as to jeopardise the security of a province for his own personal benefit is to wholly misjudge the man. Moreover, it frankly ignores the diligence with which he approached his obligations and duties as *princeps*, a role he had never wanted. Finally, this view also disregards Tiberius' solid personal experience of both the region and the Parthians: indeed, he received a rare posthumous commendation for his guile in protecting Roman interests in the east (Tacitus *Annales* 6.32). Therefore we might instead conclude that in making Cappadocia a praesidial province, Tiberius was quite carefully and deliberately avoiding any action that could be interpreted as a threat to Parthia itself, while simultaneously demonstrating his faith that the Parthians would hold fast on the agreed status of Armenia Major.

Even so, as already indicated, it was recognized that the governor of this new territory should be provided with some form of military force if for no other reason than to guarantee security within the province. Such was indeed the common practice among the so-called *inermes provinciae* or 'undefended provinces', those territories like Cappadocia that lacked a legionary garrison, and which were instead garrisoned by auxiliary troops under the direct command of the governor concerned (Ritterling 1927; Bennett 2007: 134–35). Quite how large such a garrison might be plainly depended on a combination of the territory's size and the perceived threat to its security, although it seems that one or at most two auxiliary regiments was generally considered sufficient, the usual type of unit involved being a *cohors equitata*, a body constituted from 500 or so infantrymen and about 120 cavalry troopers (Bennett 2007: 135; Eck, Pangerl 2004: 140–41). However, in the case of those imperial equestrian provinces where there was a perceived internal and/or external threat of some magnitude then a larger garrison was supplied. Thus in pre-Flavian times, the praesidial province of Judaea, a territory notorious and infamous for endemic strife among its Jewish community, was apparently provided with one cavalry *ala* and a total of five *cohortes*, of both the regular infantry and the part-mounted type (Speidel 1983b: 233).

As far as the province of Cappadocia is concerned, we have no objective means of telling the size of its garrison in the early Julio-Claudian period. On the other hand, the province comprised an area of some 80,000km^2, considerably larger than Judaea, at about 25,000km^2. Moreover, its eastern border flanked Armenia Major, a territory whose suzerainty was occasionally a matter of armed dispute between Rome and Parthia. Thus we might assume Cappadocia was given a garrison of at least the same size as that considered necessary in Judaea, and, as we will see, circumstantial evidence supports this proposition. Likewise, it is probable that just as in Judaea, most of these units were based (during the winter at least: Tacitus *Annales* 13.8.) in the principal main urban settlements that then existed in Cappadocia, namely Archelais, Comana, Melitene, Sebastopolis and Mazaca-Caesarea (see Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 6.3.8). One or two units, however, or even small detachments of troops, were probably stationed at suitable points along the main routes within the province to guarantee their security, and we might also expect that caution demanded a military presence along that part of the upper Euphrates constituting the formal political boundary with Armenia Major (on the role of the river in this sense, see Strabo 11.12.4 [522], 11.14.2 [527]; Ptolemy *Geographia* 5.12.1; also Braund 1996). Furthermore, to guarantee the continuance of Armenian 'neutrality', a Roman official and a force of auxiliaries could well have also been assigned to Zeno Artaxias in Armenia Major. After all, provision of this kind was provided for his later successor Mithridates (Tacitus *Annales* 12.45), while it had already become accepted practice for Roman army units to be established in territories beyond the formal limits of Roman control: thus, for example, the garrison established by ca. 22 BC at Qasr Ibrim, some 150km upstream of Elephantine and the Nile's First Cataract, the formal southern border of Roman Egypt (Weinstein, Turner 1976: 115).

It would seem that the combination of Tiberius' minimal military arrangements in the new province of Cappadocia and his astute diplomacy satisfied Parthia's rulers that the annexation of the territory did not pose an implicit threat to their own realm. Such at least might be concluded from the absence of any direct reference to the province in the historical record for the remainder of Tiberius' reign. On the other hand, the security of the province was doubtless one of the many matters that concerned Tiberius in the potentially precarious state of affairs that followed the death of Zeno Artaxias III in 34 or 35. What brought about this uncertain situation was the unilateral decision of the Parthian ruler, Artabanus II, to replace Zeno with his own eldest son, Arsaces, so breaking the accord over the Armenian succession – and then adding insult to injury by demanding a series of concessions from Rome (Tacitus *Annales* 6.31). Tiberius responded with a series of astute manoeuvres that displayed a quite Machiavellian command of political matters in Parthia and the region as a whole. He first capitalised on barely-hidden discontent amongst the Parthian nobility to foment a civil war and depose Artabanus, and then encouraged the pro-Roman Mithridates, a dispossessed scion of the Armenian-Iberian royal families, to seize power for himself in Armenia Major (Tacitus *Annales* 6.31–37). By 36, Mithridates was safely ensconced as ruler of his new kingdom, and although Artabanus was able to reassert control over Parthia, after various travails, he was forced to accept a return to the *status quo ante* regarding Armenia Major, allowing Tiberius to relax in the knowledge that a Roman nominee was once again securely emplaced on the Armenian throne (Tacitus *Annales* 6.43–44).

Cappadocia during the principate of Gaius-Caligula and Claudius

Although Tiberius' incisive grasp of eastern affairs served to ensure peace and stability in the immediate region throughout his reign, the tactless actions of his successor Gaius-Caligula, declared *princeps* in March 37, ultimately threatened all he had achieved in the region and elsewhere. To be sure, such a possibility could not have been anticipated at the beginning of Gaius' reign, as he initially pursued a policy of peaceful co-existence with all the Empire's neighbours, especially those in the east. Thus he provided new rulers for Armenia Minor and Pontus, installing Cotys of Thrace as king of the first and Cotys' brother Polemo as king of the second, and he then returned Commagene to its rightful ruler, Antiochus IV, compensating him for the tribute Rome got from the territory during the inter-regnum (Dio 60.12.2; Suetonius *Caligula* 16.3). Indeed, so accommodating was Gaius towards the east at this time that Artabanus of Parthia met with the governor of Syria to offer a sacrifice to the new emperor (Suetonius *Caligula* 14.2).

But this happy state of external affairs began to unravel when Gaius conceived of a plan to better secure his reputation and position at Rome through the acquisition of foreign territory. A first step was the sudden arrest and then murder in 39 of Ptolemy, king of Mauretania, followed by an armed attempt at securing the kingdom as a praesidial province (Dio 59.25.1, with 60.9.5; Seneca *de Tranquillitate Animi* 11.12; Suetonius *Caligula* 26.1, 35.1; Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 5.11). Next, in apparently the same year, Gaius ordered the equally sudden arrest of Mithridates, the ruler of Armenia Major, and deposed Cotys of Armenia Minor and Antiochus IV of Commagene, their territories being

brought back under Roman control (Tacitus *Annales* 11.8; Dio 60.8.1; Seneca *de Tranquillitate Animi* 11.12; see Wardle 1992: 441–43). These actions took place at a time when Parthian attention was distracted by a civil war initiated by the death of Artabanus in 38, and so we might reasonably conclude that Gaius also intended to take direct control of Armenia Major, not the least because family honour perhaps demanded such a course of action. After all, Gaius Caesar, Augustus' grandson, and the emperor Gaius' uncle as well as namesake, had been planning just such a project when he died in 2 BC (Seneca *de Brevitate Vitae* 4.5). However, any plans to annex Armenia Major were put on hold by the end of 39, by when Rome had dramatically lost the military advantage in Mauretania: so whatever Gaius's feelings and ambitions decreed, practicalities cautioned against a concurrent military adventure in the east. Then, in 40, even the slightest chance of success in Armenia Major evaporated with the end of the civil war in Parthia, and the decision of Vardanes, the new Parthian king of kings, to take advantage of Mithridates' absence and install his general Demonax as his viceroy in the territory (Tacitus *Annales* 11.8, with 9).

Gaius' murder in January 41 thrust his uncle Claudius into the position of *princeps* and brought with it an immediate change in Roman foreign policy. The new ruler at once set about imposing order on Mauretania by ordering it to be divided into two praesidial provinces, and by dispatching two highly experienced generals to deal with the rebels there (Dio 60.9.1–4). The next year, or the one after, he freed the deposed Mithridates from custody, and encouraged him to take back Armenia Major by force, which he did with the aid of his brother, Pharasmanes, king of Iberia, and some Roman military units assigned to him for the purpose (Tacitus *Annales* 11.8–9). Vardanes, meanwhile, was attending to matters at Seleucia on the Tigris, which he had just re-captured after seven or so years of rebellious independence. However, he soon responded to Mithridates' victory by preparing for an invasion of Armenia Major, but was dissuaded from doing so by Vibius Marsus, governor of Syria, who threatened an instantaneous retaliatory attack on Mesopotamia (Tacitus *Annales* 11.10).

Claudius' forthright manner of dealing with this threat to Armenia Major seems to have ensured that all remained quiet on the eastern front for the next few years, until unrest in Parthia provided the vehicle for major changes in Roman policy in the region. The series of events that led to this are described in some detail by Tacitus (*Annales* 12.14), who tells us that the catalyst came with the murder (by 'person's unknown') of Vardanes in about 47–48 and the immediate accession of his elder brother, the fratricidal Gotarzes II 'Epiphanes' as Parthian king of kings, the specific spur for Parthian discontent being how the new ruler initiated a reign of such violence and licentiousness that great unease spread throughout his domain. This in turn motivated a group of Parthian noblemen to approach Claudius with the request that he release from 'captivity', as a rival candidate for the Parthian throne, one Meherdates, a junior member of the Arsacid dynasty, who had originally been dispatched to Rome as a child-hostage by his own grandfather, Phraates IV (see Tacitus *Annales* 11.10). In the event, Meherdates (who was notorious for his fondness of drink and banquets) proved so incompetent that this attempt at rebellion failed miserably. But then two years later, in 51, Gotarzes himself died in mysterious circumstances, plunging Parthia into a brief civil war that ended later the same year when Vonones II (possibly his younger brother) assumed the title of king of kings, only to be immediately deposed by his own son, who become king as Vologaeses I (Tacitus *Annales* 12.14).

In themselves these events seem to have hardly impinged on Roman foreign policy in the east. On the other hand, Claudius' apparent failure to show any concern over matters in Parthia, or the general climate of political uncertainty in the region, seems to have directly inspired Pharasmanes of Iberia to divert the attentions of his rebellious son Radamistus towards a group of disaffected Armenian nobles, and then encourage him to lead a revolt against his own uncle, Mithridates of Armenia Major (Tacitus *Annales* 11.10, 12.44–45). Mithridates sought refuge with the Roman garrison *in praesidia* at the Armenian summer residence of Gorneae, which Radamistus at once placed under siege. However, when the legionary centurion in charge of the post left to inform the governor of Syria of the circumstances, the perfidious and avaricious Caelius Pollio, the auxiliary prefect in command in his absence, surrendered Mithridates to Radamistus, who immediately had his uncle executed (Tacitus *Annales* 12.45–47).

The governor of Syria at the time was Ummidius Quadratus, and when he learned what was happening in Armenia Major he chose to exercise caution while awaiting Claudius' instructions (Tacitus *Annales* 12.48). Not so, however, Julius Paelignus, the procuratorial governor of Cappadocia. When apprised of the situation he instantly assembled his auxiliary forces with the intent of restoring Mithridates to his throne, only to witness his soldiers desert *en masse* before seeing combat, allowing Cappadocia to be ravaged by 'barbarian incursions'. Paelignus accordingly sought prudence over valour (although bribery is alleged) and formally recognized Radamistus as king of Armenia, but the combination of his blatant delinquency and the raids into Cappadocia resulted in Quadratus dispatching a legion into Armenia

Major to resolve matters, only for it to withdraw after crossing the Kurdish Taurus for fear of provoking a war with Parthia (Tacitus *Annales* 12.48–49). As it was, this pusillanimous conduct achieved exactly the opposite effect, for it encouraged Vologaeses to intervene in matters in 52 and support his own brother Tiridates in an attempt on the Armenian throne. Thus, once again, unilateral action on the part of a Parthian ruler had breached the Augustan arrangements for peace in the region, and in this case also precipitated a civil war in Armenia that lasted until 54, by which time not only had Tiridates replaced Radamistus as king of Armenia Major, but Rome also had a new ruler, Nero (Tacitus *Annales* 12.50–51, with 13.6)

The genesis of the Pontic-Cappadocian frontier

The political situation Nero inherited in the east on his accession in October 54 was of great concern at Rome: hence Tacitus devotes a whole chapter of the *Annales* to the new emperor's reactions (Tacitus *Annnales* 13.8). We learn how Nero ordered that those army recruits newly drafted in 'the adjacent provinces' to Syria be assigned to the 'legions of the East', that is, the Syrian army; also that two of the Syrian legions and their auxiliaries, thus one half of the Syrian garrison, should take up position on the Armenian border (in fact in Cappadocia, as we will see) and prepare bridges for crossing the Euphrates. In addition, Marcus Agrippa, ruler of Chalcis and Judaea, and Antiochus IV of Commagene, were commanded to make ready their own royal armies for action, while Armenia Minor was detached from Pontus and presented to Aristobulus, dispossessed son of Herod of Chalcis, and Sophene was granted to Sohaemus of Emesa. In the event, open war was avoided when Vologaeses' son, Vardanes, rebelled against his father, causing the Parthian army to be withdrawn from Armenia, thus leaving Tiridates on his own and persuading Nero's sycophants to award the *princeps* triumphal honours for the perceived 'victory'.

This was not enough for Nero and his advisers, however, for they required nothing less than a full and decisive resolution of the situation with Parthia *vis-à-vis* the control of Armenia Major – through war if necessary. Consequently, they continued with their plans and sometime in early 55, by when the two legions and their auxiliaries seconded from the Syrian garrison had taken up position along the Euphrates in Cappadocia, the territory was formally combined with Galatia to form a single province. The presence of two legions in the province meant that Galatia-Cappadocia was now elevated to the status of a senior imperial province, and propriety as well as common sense demanded it be assigned to a man of consular rank with the proven administrative and martial skills necessary to govern a territory now on a war-footing. Accordingly the person chosen for the task was Cn.Domitius Corbulo, a man who had demonstrated his military acumen under Claudius in Germany, and whose recall from 'retirement' to assume this new command gives a hint as to the severity of the situation as it was then perceived.

Unfortunately, though, while making their arrangements for the new province, Nero and his advisers evidently failed to take into account the personality of Ummidius Quadratus, still in place as governor of Syria. He clearly saw the loss of one half of his army to the new Galatia-Cappadocia command as an undeserved insult, and so instead of risking a perceived loss of face in his own province, Quadratus decided to relinquish the two Syrian legions and their auxiliaries to Corbulo at Aegeae in Cilicia (Tacitus *Annales* 13.8). Moreover, it is possible that the legions he gave to Corbulo, the *III Gallica* and the *VI Ferrata*, were chosen deliberately for secondment on account of their laxity and general lack of discipline (see Tacitus *Annales* 13.38, with 35). True, this specific accusation as to their readiness for war may have been a literary *topos*, for the eastern legions were frequently charged with slackness, sometimes without clear justification (for example, Wheeler 1996: especially 271–72). Yet we should remember that the majority of Roman soldiers – like their modern equivalents – would rarely have seen actual combat and so most could well have been considered lax and undisciplined (see Dobson 1986: 23), especially by a martinet such as Corbulo. Thus, given that the east was hardly the most dangerous of military postings, Tacitus' allegations regarding the readiness of these men for war may well contain an element of truth.

The next chapter in Tacitus' *Annales* (13.9) reports how relations between Corbulo and Quadratus went from bad to worse in the winter of 55–56, once each learnt that the other had independently sent messages to the Parthian ruler suggesting peace negotiations. Tacitus implies that Vologaeses happily accepted the proposal, as it allowed him to concentrate his energies on the campaign against Vardanes, but he then tells us of the confusion that developed over which general should receive the Parthian hostages Vologaeses offered to secure the matter. Indeed, this anxious state of affairs was only resolved when the men involved chose to surrender to an auxiliary cohort dispatched by Corbulo and not the legionary centurion representing Quadratus. Still smarting from the loss of one half of his command, a now even more offended Quadratus immediately complained to Nero that he had been robbed of a deserved diplomatic victory, Corbulo countering (with some justice?) that his own reputation and arrival in

Galatia-Cappadocia had forced Vologaeses into negotiations. Nero hastily sought a compromise, and ordered that both men should be equally honoured for the 'victory'.

As was so often the case in the eastern territories, though, an emperor's public announcement of 'mission accomplished' was wildly premature. Vologaeses may have been agreeable to enter negotiations over Armenia Major, but he was not yet prepared to relinquish control of the kingdom. This is why Corbulo spent the year 57 preparing for war, first releasing from active service those men who were unsuited for campaign; and then 'restoring discipline' to his two existing legions while training the new recruits he received from Galatia and Cappadocia (Tacitus *Annales* 13.35; see Dio 62.29). Moreover, in anticipation of the war to come Corbulo was provided with a third legion, evidently the *IIII Scythica*, along with its auxiliary cavalry and infantry, these being dispatched from (or so we are told) the German garrison (Tacitus *Annales* 13.35, with 15.6; Dušanić 1978: 470–75; but note Speidel 1998: 165–67, 175–76; with 2000: 329–31). As we will see, however, Corbulo decided that this legion should remain in Cappadocia, presumably as his main field reserve (Tacitus *Annales* 13.40, with 15.6). Nonetheless, even without the *IIII Scythia*, the campaign army Corbulo assembled to take into Armenia Major the following spring must have numbered at least 20,000 men, while to prepare his men for the coming campaign he kept this entire force under canvas for the winter of 57–58 (Tacitus *Annales* 13.35; see *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* 9108).

Corbulo's battle-plan envisaged a decisive initial thrust along the upper Araxes (Aras) valley towards Artaxata (Artašat), the then capital of Armenia Major (see Tacitus *Annales* 13.39). Therefore, his army probably spent that winter of 57–58 in the Erzincan Ovası, an agriculturally rich plain located 200km west of the Araxes watershed, and whose area of about 750km^2 made it eminently suitable for assembling and training the large numbers of men involved as well as satisfying their basic food and other logistical needs (see Mitford 1974: 166; Sinclair 1989: 426–30; Russell 1987: 249). Yet like any other competent field commander, Corbulo foresaw the dangers inherent in keeping a large army in one place on training manoeuvres or foraging without providing for their overall security against surprise attack and securing the supply route(s) that brought those materials and items not available locally. For this reason the year 57 also saw the construction of *praesidia*, a series of auxiliary forts intended to secure his primary supply route from Trapezus via the Zigana pass towards Eriza (Erzincan): in other words this was a *limes* in the contemporary (early imperial) sense of the word, a series of fortified posts along a marked *via militaris* or military road (Isaac 1988: 126–28). These *praesidia* were established 'at the appropriate locations' by Paccius Orfitius, a former *primus pilus*, who was subsequently given overall command of their auxiliary garrisons, and it is clear from Tacitus' account that these garrisons were to take a proactive role if necessary (Tacitus *Annales* 13.36–37). Moreover, and what is of greater relevance here, while Corbulo was surveying the terrain and deciding where these *praesidia* should be built, he personally met and agreed an alliance with the Moschici, an *ethnos* which controlled the upper parts of the Çoruh valley, revealing how certain of these *praesidia* were probably established well to the east of the Zigana pass route and quite possibly as far east as 'Hiberia' in the direction of the Dariel pass (Tacitus *Annales* 13.36–37, 39; see Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 6.15.40). In other words, Corbulo's *praesidia* were built not only along the line of the *via militaris* from Trapezus to Eriza, but were also dispersed throughout the broader Pontic region to facilitate closer control of the relevant territory.

Tacitus does not indicate whether or not a similar system of *praesidia* existed along the Euphrates to the south of the Erzincan Ovası. However, it is frankly inconceivable that Corbulo would have risked leaving Cappadocia open to attack from the adjacent part of Armenia Major in a repeat of the disastrous and disgraceful events of 51 (see Tacitus *Annales* 12.49). Indeed, he was clearly aware that such a potential threat applied to parts at least of the Euphrates line, for he ordered Antiochus of Commagene to occupy the Armenian praefecturial districts bordering his own kingdom (Tacitus *Annales* 13.37).

On the other hand, the more obvious danger to Cappadocia was an attack using the route between Melitene (Eski Malatya or Battalgazi) and the valley of the Arsanias (Murat Su). In 68 BC, this route had provided Lucullus with speedy access into Anzitene and then along the Arsanias towards the heart of Armenia Major, and it could just as easily be used in the opposite direction. So, as the *IIII Scythica* clearly did not form part of the army that Corbulo led into the Araxes valley in 58 (see Tacitus *Annales* 13.40), he may well have placed it at Melitene to guard against this eventuality. That aside, it should not be forgotten that the Euphrates valley provided Corbulo with his main means of direct contact with Syria, and thus reserves of men and material if these should be needed: in fact his campaign army contained a detachment that had been seconded from the *X Fretensis* and which had presumably marched to the upper Euphrates by this route (Tacitus *Annales* 40). In which case it could be that our cautious general also reinforced any existing local militias along the

Cappadocian sector of the upper Euphrates with Roman auxiliary contingents – after all, he had troops to spare for the purpose. Not only did he have his third legion in reserve, presumably with its own assigned auxiliary contingents, but he also had use of the *auxilia* who were stationed in their 'winter quarters' in Cappadocia (and Galatia) at the time he was initially appointed to his command (Tacitus *Annales* 13.8.).

What is being suggested here, therefore, is that the genesis of the Pontic-Cappadocian frontier is to be found in Corbulo's decision to fortify the route from Trabzon to Erzincan and the adjacent area with a series of auxiliary *praesidia*, along with a hypothetical continuation of this system into Armenia Minor, and down the Euphrates as far as Commagene. That both Pontus and Armenia Minor were nominally independent states does not negate this supposition, for since the time of Augustus, client states within and on the periphery of Rome's provinces had been wholly subject to Roman control (see Strabo 17.3.25 [840]). Likewise, we might reject the views of some modern scholars who deny there was ever a need for a regular system of auxiliary forts along the upper Euphrates, as Cappadocia bordered a state with a stable and Hellenised system of government, and so did not need the type of controlled border found along other land frontiers (see, for example, Hodgson 1989: 181–82). Such an argument ignores not only the existing political reality, but also the nature of the terrain and the predominately semi-nomadic life-style of the peoples who lived hereabouts at the time. The many tributary valleys that run into the upper Euphrates from both east and west provide a means of access to and thus passage over the river in either direction for those who come in peace or in war. Indeed, they apparently served as a conduit for the trans-Euphratean raiders who were recognised as a real threat to the region from at least the early first century BC, when the rulers of Armenia Major began to appoint *vitaxa*, 'border generals', in the kingdom's peripheral regions (see Edwards 1986: 181). More usually, however, the same valleys allowed peaceful interaction and intercourse between two areas of shared cultural and social affinities, and were used by traders and by those transhumant farmers migrating in the summer from the dryer eastern Anatolian steppe to the Armenian highlands. But no matter who trod such routes, and for whatever reason, it was a form of inter-state activity that Rome needed to control and supervise, if only for fiscal reasons.

Yet it has to be conceded that apart from Tacitus' report regarding the Pontic '*limes*', there is little else to support the premise that Corbulo initiated work on a *de facto* frontier system along the entire Euphrates line from Eriza to the borders of Commagene. Indeed, the only fortified site of a broadly appropriate date known from this line is that at Kilise Yazısı, a place that controlled a crossing of the Euphrates and which is located at or close to the Dascusa reported in several of the Classical sources (Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 5.20, 6.10; Ptolemy *Geographia* 5.7; *Notitia Dignitatum Oriens* 38.22). This site was only partly examined (in a hurried fashion) immediately before its immersion, and to judge from the artefactual evidence then recovered there and the style of its fortifications, it was probably a Hellenistic foundation of indigenous origin (see Bennett 2002: 302, fig. 1). In which case we should reject suggestions that it might represent a Roman fort (as, for example, Sinclair 1989: 94; Wheeler 1997a: 223). Even so, certain of the indigenous pre-Roman fortified sites in Britain have provided evidence that the Roman army was not averse to utilizing them and their fortifications when necessary during campaign periods (see Todd 1985). Moreover, recent work at Gordion has shown that a section at least of a Roman auxiliary unit was based within the earlier settlement site there from possibly the Julio-Claudian period and certainly from Flavian times, and this place continued to be used by the Roman army until the reign of Trajan or Hadrian. Given the evident tactical importance attached to the Euphrates crossing close to Kilise Yazısı in later years, with an auxiliary unit being based hereabouts from at least the Flavian period into the fourth century, then it is at least conceivable that the site (or its vicinity) may also have been (re-)used by one of Corbulo's auxiliary units.

The formalisation of the Pontic-Cappadocian frontier

Although we remain ignorant concerning the finer details of the defensive and offensive strategies supervised by Corbulo in 57, they persuaded Tiridates to explore the potential of peace negotiations, although in the event, he refused to submit to Rome. This initiated Corbulo's great Armenian campaign of 58–60, and the eventual installation of the pro-Roman Tigranes on the Armenian throne. These are events that do not concern us here, and they have in any case been discussed in detail elsewhere (Henderson 1901; Wheeler 1997b). However, we should note that in 60, after Quadratus died in office, Corbulo was appointed *legatus* of Syria while simultaneously retaining his authority over Galatia-Cappadocia; and that in 61 Tigranes brought a Parthian attack upon himself by invading Adiabene, forcing Corbulo to despatch two legions to his aid. It seems that these two legions were the *IIII Scythica* and the *XII Fulminata*, and that both were sent into Armenia Major from Cappadocia, as they are known to have spent the winter of 61–62 in that province. (Tacitus *Annales* 15.1–3, with 6). Either way, by the end of the year 61 both these legions and the *auxilia* of Galatia-Cappadocia, as well as those auxiliary

units 'in the Pontus', came under the authority of Caesennius Paetus, the newly arrived *legatus* of the joint province. Moreover, Paetus was evidently mandated by Nero to incorporate Armenia Major into the Roman *imperium*, for by the end of the same year the *V Macedonica* had been ordered to leave its base at Troesmis in Moesia for the Pontus, presumably travelling by ship, while the *XV Apollinaris* was commanded to leave its home at Carnuntum for Cappadocia, using (it would seem) the land route (Tacitus *Annales* 15.6, with 15.25; see Wheeler 2000: 274–75).

The sequence of events that followed, including Paetus' disastrous Armenian foray in 62, as well as the show of force by Corbulo leading to the Peace of Rhandeia in 63, and Rome's reluctant acceptance of a Parthian nominee, Tiridates I, as the new ruler of Armenia Major, are also of no direct concern in the present paper. Except, that is, to note three things. The first is how Corbulo brought with him from Syria to Melitene the *legiones III Gallica* and *VI Ferrata*, and that for the purposes of saving Paetus and his army he also took command of the *XV Apollinaris* and the *V Macedonica*, the latter unit having been left 'languishing' in Pontus since its arrival in 61–62 (Tacitus *Annales* 15.25, 26; also Wheeler 2000: 274–75). The second is that after Corbulo arrived on the scene and secured the safety of what remained of Paetus' army, he transferred the *legiones IIII Scythica* and *XII Fulminata* to Syria (Tacitus *Annales* 15.26, 27). Finally, we should observe how our sources do not provide so much as a hint that Corbulo was obliged to instantly take his army out of Armenia Major itself in order to secure the terms agreed at Rhandeia, a situation quite unlike that which prevailed after Paetus' surrender in 62, when all his troops were at once withdrawn from the territory (Tacitus *Annales* 15.14; Dio 62.21.2). Indeed, there is epigraphic evidence to show that at least one of Corbulo's legions remained in Armenia Major until as late as 64–65, which is when the *III Gallica* was involved in some substantial building work at Kassérik (Harput) in the southern part of the kingdom (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 3.6741–43 = *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* 232).

On the other hand, Nero and his advisers could not have failed to perceive the inherent danger in a situation whereby Parthia asserted dominance over an Armenia Major that had a member of the Parthian Arsacid dynasty emplaced as its ruler. A future attack on Asia Minor and/or Syria by a united Parthian and Armenian army was a real possibility: which is why – as we will see – Nero chose to keep the *legiones III*, *V*, *VI* and *XV* in the Anatolian-Eurasian interface zone after the Peace of Rhandeia was agreed. Furthermore, it was doubtless in connection with this nascent threat that Pontus Polemoniacus was annexed to Galatia-Cappadocia in 63–64, Polemo being given Cilicia Tracheia as a consolation prize, the Trapezountian militia being elevated to the status of a Roman auxiliary cohort, its men being given Roman weapons and armour as well as Roman citizenship, while Trapezus itself now became the base the incipient *Classis Pontica* (Josephus *de Bello Judaico* 2.16.4; Tacitus *Historiae* 3.47; Suetonius *Nero* 18; also Sullivan 1980b: 930). That aside, it seems that Corbulo was probably in charge of all these developments, as the evidence suggests he was re-appointed as *legatus* of the now greatly enlarged Galatia-Cappadocia command after Rhandeia, holding that position until he committed suicide at Cenchreae (Dio 63.17.5–6). This might be deduced from the fact that Corbulo was replaced as *legatus* of Syria in 63 by Cestius Gallus, and there is a gap existing in the list of provincial *legati* for Galatia-Cappadocia between Paetus' ruinous tenure of office and the appointment of Calpurnius Asprenas in 68–69. Strong grounds, then, for believing that Corbulo, Rome's pre-eminent general, spent the relevant period in a second term as governor of the enlarged Galatia-Cappadocia and its then garrison of initially four and then three legions, for this would be an entirely appropriate choice of command for a man of his experience.

Whether or not Corbulo did hold the enlarged Galatia-Cappadocia command in 63–67, we do need to consider the reason(s) that prompted the annexation of Polemo's kingdom. Now, it is true that Pontus Polemoniacus had been a *de facto* military district of the Roman Empire from at least 57, when Corbulo established his Pontic *limes*. Moreover, the *legio V Macedonica* was to all intents and purposes stationed there in 61–63 while awaiting action in Armenia Major. Even so, the annexation of the kingdom to make it an entirely Roman territory, and in the process ejecting its entirely complaisant ruler, hints at some longer-term strategic or tactical plan devised by Nero and his advisers for the general region. Indeed, it could well have been, as some suggest, that Pontus Polemoniacus was seized to provide a 'jump-off point' for the 'Caspian' campaign that Nero was planning towards the end of his reign. As it is, our information regarding this proposed enterprise is not of the best, for it consists essentially of the bare facts that in 66 Nero raised a new legion, the *legio I Italica*, specifically for an operation aimed at the 'Caspian Gates'; and that the same year saw the transfer to the Danube of the *XIV Gemina* from Britain and several army detachments from Germany and Illyria to prepare for a 'Caspian' war against the Albani (Suetonius *Nero* 19.2; Tacitus *Historiae* 1.6, with 2.32; Dio 63.8.1; and Mitford 1980a: 1178). To this we might add the factual detail that although the *XV Apollinaris* was despatched to

Alexandria in Egypt sometime before 66 (Josephus *de Bello Judaico* 3.1.8; Dio 63.8.1), there were still perhaps as many as three legions in the Anatolian-Eurasian interface zone at the time, namely the *legiones III*, *V* and *VI*. In other words, the known and suspected military dispositions in 66 do allow for the possibility that – as many modern authorities believe – Nero annexed Pontus Polemoniacus as part of a planned attack against the Sarmatians by way of the Caucasus, Tacitus and Suetonius having simply confused the real Caspian Gates, the Rhagae-Sirdara pass in modern Iran, once crossed by Alexander the Great, with the Caucasian Gates or Dariel pass (Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 6.15.40.181; Anderson 1928: 130–32). On the other hand, such an interpretation of the evidence ignores the possibility that our sources are in fact correct: perchance Nero really did intend a *Caspian* expedition, one that was initially directed against the Albani as a first stage in an invasion of the Parthian heartland via Media and Adiabene.

Yet when all is said and done, we must remember that in 63–64, when Pontus Polemoniacus was annexed, a clear and present threat to Roman interests in this region existed in the reality of an Arsacid in place on the Armenian throne, and so we might reasonably doubt that the possibility of a future Caucasian/Caspian offensive provided the primary motive for annexing Polemo's kingdom. In which case a more logical reason suggests itself for this ostensibly peremptory action, namely that it was (initially, at least) annexed for purely tactical reasons. In other words, to ensure Tiridates' compliance with the wishes of Rome by securing and making permanent Corbulo's *via militaris* between Trapezus and Eriza, and thence – it is assumed here – to Cappadocia and Commagene. After all, Corbulo's arrangements in 57 aside and no matter the nature and distribution of the *praesidia* he created at that time, by 68 at the very latest, this border region between Roman and Armenian territory had certainly been transformed into a formal military zone. This is certified by no less an authority than Tacitus, who in reporting army deployments at the end of that year indicates that a series of auxiliary units were then in Cappadocia on a permanent basis and stationed 'facing towards' Armenia Major: in other words, they were in forts positioned along the Pontic-Cappadocian frontier (Tacitus *Historiae* 2.6). So, while we remain uncertain as to Nero's original motives for annexing Pontus Polemoniacus, it seems more than likely that as Armenia Major was then in Arsacid hands, then the event coincided with (and perhaps spurred) a formalisation of the Pontic-Cappadocian frontier – which is why the credit for creating the Pontic-Cappadocian frontier should really be given to Nero and not Vespasian, as generally stated (Mitford 1980a: 1180; Mitchell 1993: 118).

The overall line of this pre-68 frontier system is relatively clear, as the general course of the road that formed its backbone must have corresponded to a large extent with the general course of the Trapezus-Samosata route as this is recorded by the later *Itinerarium (provinciarium) Antonini (Augusti)* and the *Tabula Peutingeriana*. It is true that in some sectors these two sources radically differ with regard to their listing of stations along the way (for example, Mitford 1980b). But this is because they describe variant options for following the same general route, the first being an official document listing a series of itineraries compiled over a period of time for planning imperial journeys, the second a 'road map' for civil use, but probably derived from an itinerary intended for the *cursus publicus* (Dilke 1998: 115, 125). As such, they describe whatever route is more convenient for the purpose in hand, and thus not necessarily the precise line taken by the *via militaris* here, never mind a route that rigidly led from one fort to the next (see Crow, French 1980: 907–09).

The point being that a *via militaris* follows the most convenient route required for patrol and regulatory purposes, which is why roads of this type were driven along ridges rather than taking the often more 'convenient' route along a valley. Furthermore, where such military roads were not part of any principal communications route, then they were often simple *viae terrenae*, cleared tracks 'paved' with compacted natural or gravelled surfaces, which explains why proving the course of such a road is often a difficult task (for example, Graf 1997: 124–25). Moreover, it was the existence of a *via militaris* that provided the *raison d'être* for the forts established along its route rather than the forts being the reason for the route of the road (see Isaac 1992: 128). After all, the locations the Roman army chose for its forts were dictated by tactical necessity, together with the requirements of space and local environmental factors – which is why so many of these fort sites (or their immediate localities) remained in use throughout the principate and into the dominate. Consequently, it was not unusual for a fort to be located some distance and at a different altitude from the main path of an associated *via militaris* with the two elements being linked by a lesser trackway; a state of affairs best seen in the original plan of Hadrian's Wall (see Daniels 1978: 38). All in all, then, it is clear that the *Itinerarium Antonini* and the *Tabula Peutingeriana* are of relatively limited use in establishing either the precise line of the *via militaris* or the exact locations of the *praesidia* that formed the principal elements of the Pontic-Cappadocian frontier.

Even so, when considered alongside the information provided by Ptolemy's *Geographia* and the *Notitia Dignitatum*, the *Itinerarium Antonini* and the *Tabula*

Peutingeriana are of great use in preparing a provisional schedule of the military stations established along Nero's Pontic-Cappadocian *limes*. Thus, as we learn from the resolute work of Timothy Mitford (1998), in the northern part of the region the *via militaris* probably ignored the easier route south by way of the Zigana pass (2,025m) to transect the Pontic mountains using the longer and more difficult eastern track over the Kiranbey Tepe (2,380m). It then ran via the evocatively-named Frig<i>darium (Anzarya Hanları) towards Domana (Komanır Tepe or Köse) and Satala (Sadak), and thence by way of the Kolçekmezdağı pass (2,100m) to the Erzincan Ovası. However, from here to Zimara (?Pingan), and then Melitene and on to Charmodara in Syria, the military surveyors faced a major problem, as much of the upper Euphrates is contained within gorges, with space only for a mule-track in places (see Mitford 1980b: 913–15). True, when the Roman army faced a similar predicament at the Iron Gates gorge on the Danube, they resolved it by building a wooden walkway cantilevered from one side of the chasm (Sasel 1973); but no evidence has ever been noted at any point along the Euphrates to suggest such a solution was adopted here.

As a result, in these parts the *via militaris* ran along the higher terrain that lay to the west of the Euphrates proper, as did the communications routes listed in the *Itinerarium Antonini* and the *Tabula Peutingeriana* (see Mitford 1980b: 915). Moreover, this higher elevation was also where most of the garrisons responsible for patrol work along this part of the Euphrates and the road itself were stationed, as at Chiaca (Morhamam), Sabus (Çit Köy) and Carsagis (Melik Şerif). True, which ever precise line was chosen for such a route it involved negotiating steep and abraded slopes that in some places rise to between 1,700–2,500m, and thus generally ice- and snow-bound from early November until the end of March (see Erinç 1969: 346; Wheeler 1997a: 223). The Roman army was prepared for such matters, however, spring and summer being the principal seasons for replenishing any necessary supplies, allowing fort garrisons to build a stockpile for periods when regular access could not be guaranteed (see Tacitus *Agricola* 22.1). That aside, we should note how the often sheer sides of the upper Euphrates' gorges are broken by places where alluvial deposits from confluent streams have created level areas suitable for settlement – and for access across the Euphrates itself. Hence the existence of such settlements (and probably military garrisons) at Vereuso (Geruşla) and at Barsalium (Killik), where passage over the Euphrates was possible in the summer months, with spur trackways running up from river-level to the more level terrain that lay above and to the west where the north-south 'frontier' road was.

It is likely that some of the men from the four legions Corbulo had in hand after Rhandeia were employed on the formalisation of the Neronian frontier dispositions. More to the point, it is probable that after the departure of the *XV Apollinaris* for Egypt in ca. 65, the other three legions (the *III*, *V* and *VI*) still remained in the Galatia-Cappadocia-Pontus region when the Jewish Revolt began in late 66. Such becomes clear only if we briefly digress to examine what is known of the military deployments at the time of the revolt, beginning with the single known relevant fact that, when the revolt began, Cestius Gallus, the governor of Syria, decided to use the *legio XIII Fulminata* and 2,000-strong vexillations from his 'other legions' to resolve the matter (Josephus *de Bello Judaico* 2.18.9). Now one of these 'other legions' must have been the *X Fretensis*, as although it supplied a vexillation for Corbulo's first Armenian campaign, it remained in Syria throughout Nero's reign (see Tacitus *Annales* 40; also Josephus *de Bello Judaico* 2.19.7). The identity of the other legions involved in Gallus' task-force is not certain, but it is generally assumed they were the *III* and *VI*, for these were certainly in Syria at the conclusion of the First Jewish Revolt (for example, Levick 1999: 27–28; see Dabrowa 2000: 310). However, there is evidence to caution against this belief, and which is also directly relevant to the military status of Galatia-Cappadocia at this time.

To begin with, it is important to know that the *III Gallica*, which is attested at Kassérik (Harput) in southern Armenia in 64–65 (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 3.6741–43 = *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* 232), was transferred early in 68 to Moesia in response to raids over the Danube by the Roxolani of Wallachia (Tacitus *Historiae* 1.79; Suetonius *Vespasian* 6.3). Now these raids were no doubt inspired by the weakening of the Danubian front's central sector after the dispatch in 61–62 of the *V Macedonica* from Troesmis to Pontus, where the legion subsequently 'languished' until at least 63 (Tacitus *Annales* 15.26). However, by April 67, the *V Macedonica* was in Ptolemais, Judaea, where it joined up with the *legiones X Fretensis* and the *XV Apollinaris* to constitute Vespasian's Judaean task-force (Josephus *de Bello Judaico* 3.4.2). Thus when reinforcements were urgently needed for the Danubian front, it was the *III Gallica* that was sent there, as it was evidently the nearest legion that could be deployed to Moesia when the occasion demanded. In other words, it seems most improbable that the entire force of the *III Gallica* could have been in Syria and under Gallus' command in 66: it is much more likely that the bulk of the legion remained in Galatia-Cappadocia after Corbulo's campaign (see Keppie 1986: 420, who implies as much). Only in this way could it have been available to be transferred post-

haste to Moesia when reinforcements were urgently needed there. And it follows that if the *III Gallica* was still in Galatia-Cappadocia in 66–68, the *VI Ferrata* may also have been there as well, thus confirming the territory's continued administrative and military status as a senior imperial province. Indeed, as far as we can determine from our sources, Galatia-Cappadocia retained at least one legion in its garrison until at least mid-68 (Tacitus *Historiae* 2.6; Josephus *de Bello Judaico* 2.364–87, with 7.18).

The Flavians and the Pontic-Cappadocian frontier

Vespasian's acclamation as emperor *in absentia* in December of 69 had an almost instant effect on the political and military situation of the Anatolian provinces and client states. In fact, we might speculate that these reforms may well have been initiated as early as 70 when the new emperor made his return journey to Rome via the coast of Asia Minor (see Philostratus *Vita Apollonii* 5.41). One of the first was evidently the removal of Aristobulus from the throne of Armenia Minor, after which his kingdom was attached to Galatia-Cappadocia, while Polemo of Cilicia Tracheia was deposed for a second time, the territory he had received in compensation for the Pontus now being assigned to the province of Cilicia (Suetonius *Vespasian* 8.4; Mitford 1980a: 1180–81; Reinach 1925: 136, nos 3–8). Moreover, it was evidently in connection with these events that Vespasian decided to re-affirm the status of Galatia-Cappadocia as a senior (consular) imperial propraetorian command by deploying at first one and then two legions there on a permanent basis (Suetonius *Vespasian* 8.4). Thus sometime before the end of 70, Melitene in Cappadocia, the focus of Roman military activity on several earlier occasions and most recently the spring-board for Corbulo's second Armenian campaign, became the base for the *XII Fulminata* (Josephus *de Bello Judaico* 7.1–3; Tacitus *Annales* 15.27). However, the location chosen for the second legionary fortress, at Satala, a day's march from the Erzincan Ovası, would appear to have been an essentially new *locus operandi* for the Roman military, for although it commands three main routes between the Pontus and the two Armenias (Bryer, Winfield 1985: 33), it is situated in a rather small and enclosed basin, making it unsuitable for assembling a large campaign army of the size that Corbulo used in his Armenian campaigns. That apart, there is some uncertainty as to exactly when this legionary fortress was established. This is because its earliest known garrison was the newly-formed *XVI Flavia*, born in the Rhineland in 70–71 from remnants of the *legio XVI Gallica* after its poor conduct in the Batavian Revolt, but as 'soldiers' (sic) of the legion are attested working at Antioch in April–June 75, then it seems that the legion may have been initially assigned to Syria and did not arrive in Cappadocia until after that date (Van Berchem 1983: 189–91).

The epigraphic record as its currently stands, in indicating that Vespasian's reformed consular province of Galatia-Cappadocia may not have received its second legion until 75 or later, presents us with certain problems. To begin with, it directly contradicts the literary record, but it also suggests that Vespasian chose to ignore the relatively perilous situation that existed along the eastern frontier at the very beginning of his reign. This was, after all, a time when not only was there work still to be done on suppressing the Jewish Revolt but several other parts of the Empire were experiencing strife at this time, and so there was a real chance that the Parthians might take advantage of the situation to advance into Armenia Major and Cappadocia. As it was, such was the perceived potential of a Parthian incursion that, in 72, Vespasian found it necessary to depose Antiochus of Commagene and annex his kingdom to Syria, and then station a legion in the territory (Josephus *de Bello Judaico* 7.219–243; Suetonius *Vespasian* 8.4; but note Dabrowa 1994: 19–27). That aside, the available evidence strongly suggests that the most likely candidate as Vespasian's first governor of this revived legionary command is M.Ulpius Traianus, father of the later emperor Trajan, and suffect consul (*in absentia*?) in September–October 70 (Syme 1958: 31, n. 1; Gallivan 1981: 187–99, 213; Bennett 2001: 17, 216). Yet a single legion province would (in theory, at least) be entirely unbecoming for an ex-consul such as Traianus, for his status entitled him to a senior imperial province with at least two legions *in praesidia* (Dabrowa 1998: 162, n. 657; Caballos Rufino 1990: 307). However, in the state of flux surrounding the end of the civil war of 68–69, and the imposition of the new regime and its associated military deployments, it could be that neither Vespasian nor Traianus were especially bothered by the niceties of the formal Roman administrative hierarchy at this time.

Such apart, by 76 at the latest, Cn.Pompeius Collega, the then governor of Galatia-Cappadocia, had embarked on the creation of a formal network of permanent roads in the province (French 1988: no. 365; see Rémy 1989: 187–88). This road-building project seems to have been intensified or at the least was still under way between 80–81 and 82–83, when A.Caesennius Gallus was governor of Galatia-Cappadocia (French 1988: nos 76, 93, 98, 108, 111, 160, 375, (?)364, 569 and 602; see Rémy 1989: 190–92; also Mitford 1980a: 1183–85; 1989; 1998; French 1983: 84–94). From the point of view of this paper, however, what is of greater interest is an inscription which was found in a re-used context in the late Roman fort at

Pağnık Öğreni, just across the river from Kilise Yazısı, for this records building work by an auxiliary unit under Gallus' oversight in the years 81–82 (Harper 1974: 108; Mitford 1974: 172). Unfortunately the text is incomplete, and so while we can be certain that the work was (ostensibly) completed under Gallus' direction, all that is known of the auxiliary *cohors* responsible is that it was numbered either II or III (the suggestion of Mitford [1974: 172] that it was the *cohors II Ulpia milliaria Petraeorum* is impossible on chronological grounds). As such, this text is of considerable significance in providing us with the earliest evidence to date for an auxiliary unit employed in masonry construction on its own behalf, as until the reign of Hadrian, this kind of work was usually undertaken by the supposedly more skilled legionaries (see Lander 1984: 20–30; also Bennett 2006: 293–94).

However, what is important here is the find-spot of this inscription, directly across the Euphrates from Kilise Yazısı, a place that (as we have already seen) is situated at a crossing point of the Euphrates which more or less coincides with the location of the Dascusa known from the Classical sources (Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 5.20, 6.10; Ptolemy *Geographia* 5.7). Whether or not Kilise Yazısı (or its vicinity) was also the location of one of the Neronian period forts along the Pontic-Cappadocian frontier, as implied above, is now unverifiable, but it does at least seem possible, given that this inscription indubitably demonstrates that by the beginning of Domitian's reign at the very latest it was found necessary to (?re)build an auxiliary fort hereabouts. Indeed, the *Notitia Dignitatum* confirms that Dascusa retained a tactical role into the later fourth century, by when it was the home base of the *ala II [Ulpia] Auriana* (*Notitia Dignitatum Oriens* 38.22), although whether this unit occupied the known late Roman fortification of Pağnık Öğreni is uncertain.

The Dascusa text apart, little else could be said until quite recently concerning the nature of the auxiliary garrison in Galatia-Cappadocia under the Flavians, other than that the units concerned are likely to have occupied sites originally established by Corbulo. All this changed in 2001, however, with the rapid appearance on the art market of no less than one complete and two fragmentary auxiliary diplomata that were issued for the province in the years 94, 100 and 101 (Eck, Pangerl 2004; Pferdehirt 2004: 18–19). For those unfamiliar with these documents, all that needs to be said here is that they are the bronze versions of one type of discharge document available to Roman auxiliary soldiers when they completed their 25 years of service; and that an intact example will often provide a virtually complete list of the auxiliary garrison within a specific province on a specific date (see Bennett 2007: 132–34 for a fuller account). A comprehensive analysis of these specific texts along with other sources that inform us about the auxiliary units stationed in Galatia and Cappadocia in the Roman period is held over for another time and place. However, the listings these sources provide suggest that, from at least the later Flavian period onwards, the auxiliary garrison in Galatia-Cappadocia usually consisted of three or four cavalry *alae* and 13 or 14 infantry *cohortes*, several of the latter being part-mounted *cohortes equitata.* Indeed, it would seem that almost one half of this auxiliary force consisted of cavalrymen in either the *alae* or in the part-mounted *cohortes equitata*, a proportion of cavalry to infantry that indicates a garrison intended for wide-ranging patrols both within Roman territory and beyond (see the substantial cavalry detachments of the *cohors I Hispanorum veterana equitata*, at Stobi in Thrace, but across the Danube on expeditions and scouting duties: Lepper, Frere 1988: 244–49, lines 26 and 32.259, especially).

The point is of course that the Flavianic formalization of the Neronian frontier schedule for the Pontic-Cappadocian frontier did not mark an end to Roman interests in matters to the east of that line, or the possibility of intervention when considered necessary. The Augustan dictum, that kings and other foreign potentates only held their position with the grace of Caesar, still applied: their territories were not inviolate (see Strabo 17.3.25 [840]). And in fact three well-known and oft-quoted inscriptions from Classical Iberia and Albania provide clear evidence that this was the case within the Anatolian-Eurasian interface zone for the period we are concerned with. Of these, the earliest is from Harmozica, and records the building of defences there in 75 by Roman troops on behalf of Mithridates, king of Iberia (*Supplementum Epigraphicum, Graecum* 20.112). The second, from Gobustan, 44 miles southwest of Baku, dates to the reign of Domitian, and simply tells us that a centurion of the *XII Fulminata*, the legion based at Melitene at the time, was there (*L'anée épigraphique* 1951.263; see Heidenreich 1983). The third, at Karjagino (Fuzuli, Azerbaijan), also apparently recorded the *XII Fulminata*, although nothing further seems to be known of this apparently now-lost text (Mitford 1980a: 1194, n. 57). It seems safe to assume, however, that all three texts reflect long-range hegemonic control of the region of the type known to have existed in Julio-Claudian times, when a Roman garrison was stationed at Gorneae in Armenia Major (see Tacitus *Annales* 12.45–47). Thus while the formal frontier of the Roman Empire in the critical hinge region at the southeastern corner of Eurasia may have been marked on the Pontic-Cappadocian line, Roman interests in and influence over events east of there had by no means come to an end. But that is another story, and one to be told another time.

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